

Watson Township Planning Commission

July 24, 2013

Regular Meeting Minutes

1. Call to order-

Chairperson David Carter called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll call and recognition of visitors-

Present: David Carter, Barb Wroblewski, Bruce Bos, Chuck Andrysiak, Michelle Harris, Bev McKinnon, Troy Baker and Mark Sisson

Absent: none

Visitors- Kim Harmsen, Karen Fifelski, Allison Baker, MaryAnn Baker

4. Approval of Minutes- motion made by Chuck Andrysiak to approve the Minutes. It was seconded by Troy Baker. All approved.

5. Public comments and communications concerning items not on Agenda- none

6. Approval of Agenda- motion made by Chuck Andrysiak; seconded by Bruce Bos

7. Old Business-

- a. Karen Fifelski presented detailed information about her concerns with horizontal hydraulic fracturing. She explained this process is exempt from current laws; it's a burden on rural areas, road structure and the environment. The website [respectmyplanet.org](http://respectmyplanet.org) has numerous examples of these areas being impacted by the fracturing. She showed us multiple photo examples. There were pictures of the dust from the trucks, the size of the tanks, as well as acres of clear cut trees.

- b. Karen Fifelski made mention of the Township Act of 2006 in that townships can regulate ancillary uses of the fracturing process such as hours of operation, noise, and pollution for example. Other Acts she referred to were the Public Franchise Act and the MIPA Act.
- c. She stated that the industry wants to begin in our area this fall and has already completed seismic testing. Karen has requested that we consider enacting a moratorium to postpone the actions of fracturing. Canon Township in Kent County was mentioned as one who has a moratorium in place.
- d. She noted there are a few people on both the Watson Township Board and the Watson Township Planning Commission that have already signed leases with a hydraulic fracturing company. She was wondering if this has created a conflict of interest. According to the Watson Township Planning Commission By-Laws, if members have signed leases for their properties they should recuse themselves from all discussion and voting because of the appearance of a conflict of interest.
- e. Dave Carter and Chuck Andrysiak have attended Gun Plains Township meetings about the same subject and shared what they learned. Dave read a section of a letter from Watson Township's lawyer stating that he believes we cannot support the proposed ordinances that were given to him. Mark Sisson cautioned us as to the risks of a moratorium and that ancillary operations are the only things included such an action. We should assume a moratorium would be challenged.
- f. It was noted that the Michigan State Legislature has restricted the townships authority regarding horizontal hydraulic fracturing. Townships will be alone in their attempts to block hydraulic fracturing practices. Mark Sisson pointed out the counties that are taking action seem to have the financial resources, people making donations and lawyers that are willing to take on this issue. It was re-emphasized that our hands are tied at this time. Watson Township Board will have the final say as to how we should proceed.
- g. Bruce Bos inquired as to the possibly of the Michigan Township Association (MTA) being a resource for Karen. Mark Sission stated that the MTA is not involved at this time because there is no consensus among townships.
- h. We as the Planning Commission of Watson Township intend to educate ourselves and conduct more research before taking action on this subject. We will be checking into inviting the DEQ to make a presentation; perhaps at our next meeting.

8. New Business- Dave Carter shared copies of a letter from our township's lawyers office to PCI about Watson Townships Zoning Ordinance related to side yard setbacks and accessory building provisions. This letter is what prompted a discussion to establish a new ordinance. Mark Sisson referred us to the zoning ordinance, sec. 22.09 (b). He suggested that we consider how the majority of the properties are already set up. Then we can use those findings as a guideline for a new ordinance to clarify the setback issue.

9. On Going Business/Any Other Business- none

10. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 9:10pm by Troy Baker. It was seconded by Bruce Bos. All approved.

Submitted by,

Michelle Harris  
Watson Township Planning Commission Secretary